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SUBJECT: OMAN/IRAN: QABOOS IN TEHRAN

REF: MUSCAT 833; MUSCAT 823

11. (U) SUMMARY: The Sultan's visit to Iran (Ref A) dominated local media on Wednesday, August 5 and appears to have been featured prominently in Iran. Coverage of meetings with Iran's president and supreme leader (referred to variously by that title or as "leader of the revolution"), along with stories on ministerial level meetings, made no mention of how Qaboos will fill the rest of his time in the Islamic Republic. He was not, however, present in coverage of the inauguration that took place in Tehran Wednesday morning. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) All Omani media showcase the Iranian visit, highlighting the arrival ceremonies and Qaboos's meeting with Ahmedinijad, but giving special prominence to the meeting with Supreme Leader Khamanei (with a clear, if unspoken, sense that the royal peer is indeed the head of state rather than the head of government). English and Arabic papers referred to Khamanei variously as "supreme leader" and "leader of the revolution"; one described him simply as "a senior cleric," and several resorted, unusually, to using only his surname for most of their reporting. Coverage in both Arabic and English is almost wholly formulaic and follows precedents set by previous royal regional visits. Significant space is devoted to meetings held by the delegation accompanying the Sultan (Ref B), noting that the traveling ministers met with their counterparts. Projects reported to have been discussed include petrochemical cooperation, a "crimefighting" security agreement, and enhanced tourism and professional exchange.

13. (U) Editorial content was limited to columns in the Arabic state daily "Oman" and one private Arabic daily, "Al Watan." Both praise the visit in general terms as a reflection of wise Omani regional and foreign policy and as a step toward greater bilateral and regional cooperation. "Al Watan" notes that it comes at time when the new American administration "might achieve what the former president could not" in terms of warmer U.S.-Iran relations.

14. (U) The Iranian presidency's statement on the visit highlighted quotes attributed to the Sultan calling his trip a "turning point" in Oman-Iran relations, saying that he "felicitated" the president on his re-election and anticipated that the visit "will bear fruitful results for Iran and Oman." Iranian coverage also featured the Supreme Leader's admonition to Qaboos that "The US and some meddling states by continuously injecting insecurity and suspicion have never allowed the sensitive Persian Gulf region to witness calm." None of these details appear in Omani coverage.

15. (U) Public reaction in Muscat remains light. Commenters on the popular Al-Sablah 2 Internet forum (omania2.net) query the value of enhanced Oman-Iran relations and specifically any security agreement, saying that in light of Oman's history (which includes repeated Persian invasions) the Iranians are not trustworthy partners. Another notes sarcastically the lack of a common language between the Sultan and the Iranian president, wondering if each fully understood the other.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Neither Omani nor Iranian coverage of the visit to date includes any surprises. The former positions the Sultan's trip firmly within existing Omani foreign policy goals, while the latter

(to the extent possible without offending Omani sensitivities) promotes it to demonstrate the Iranian government's legitimacy and stability. While nothing has been made public about the balance of the royal visit, Qaboos's absence from coverage of Wednesday morning's inauguration and the lack of any additional announced meetings seem to indicate that its public portion has ended. END COMMENT.  
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